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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 001007

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E.O.12958: N/A

TAGS: [KHIV](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [OAU](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: OAU HIV/AIDS SUMMIT IN ABUJA

11. Thirty-five African heads of state attended the Extraordinary OAU Summit on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Other Related Infectious Diseases held in Abuja April 26-27. Featured guest speakers included UN Secretary General Koffi Annan and former President Bill Clinton. Jerry Rawlings, former President of Ghana, was also there. The purpose of the Summit was to forge a common African understanding of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the form of the so-called Abuja Declaration and to approve an OAU Action Plan two months in advance of the worldwide AIDS Conference at the UN General Assembly.

12. After emotive speeches by individuals representing persons living with AIDS, TB victims and African youth, Secretary General Annan mounted the podium and called for a

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"Marshall Plan" to combat HIV/AIDS. He sketched the broad outlines of a proposed five-point program and announced the establishment of an international AIDS fund that would, if fully funded, make available USDols 7 to 10 billion per year to fight AIDS world-wide. Former President Clinton acknowledged the need for such a fund, but warned that it could only be effective if every African Head of State began immediately to put systems into place to ensure that money from the fund would be effectively utilized in national HIV/AIDS prevention programs. Clinton recalled how President Obasanjo embraced a woman living with HIV/AIDS when the two Presidents attended a symposium in Abuja in August 2000. He said that simple act sent a powerful message throughout Nigeria, and challenged other leaders to follow Obasanjo's example. The former President also praised the efforts of Angola and Ghana to de-stigmatize the disease.

13. The five-member official American delegation was headed by Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Nancy Powell. Other members included Acting Assistant Administrator of USAID Valerie Dickson-Horton, Special Adviser to the Secretary of Health and Human Services Willis Morris, Director of the US Public Health Service Office of HIV/AIDS Dr. Eric Goosby, and Timothy W. Smith of State/OES. Acting AFR/AA Dickson-Horton presented a paper on Sustainable Resource Mobilization to Fight HIV/AIDS in the third of four Heads-of-State panels, this one chaired by a relatively restrained Col. Muammar Qadhafi.

14. The "Message of Hope" Ambassador Powell was to deliver on behalf of Secretary of State Powell and Secretary of Health and Human Services Thompson was bumped from the opening ceremony. This appeared to have been an intentional snub by lower-level conference organizers who were disappointed at the level of U.S. representation and that Secretary Powell did not attend. Embassy intervention with senior Nigerian and OAU officials succeeded in getting the "Message" back on the program in the time slot originally envisioned -- during the signing of the Abuja Declaration. The "Message" received prominent press coverage, as did speeches by Presidents Obasanjo, Moi, Kerekou, Eyadema and Bouteflika and former Ghanaian President Rawlings.

15. In the Abuja Declaration, participating Heads of State committed themselves to take personal responsibility and a direct leadership role in the fight against HIV/AIDS in their respective countries. Most dramatically, participants pledged to "set a target" allocation of 15 percent of their annual budgets for "improvement of the health sector," while "scaling up" HIV/AIDS education. The Declaration urges increased foreign assistance to Africa, as well as outright debt forgiveness for the Continent, which participants agreed to devote to "investment in the social sector."

16. The Abuja Framework for Action set forth concrete objectives for arresting rates of HIV, TB and other related infectious diseases. The Action Plan's objectives call on African leaders to: (1) adequately fund primary health care, (2) develop national policies to combat these

diseases and to control their socio-economic side-effects, (3) establish "sustainable mechanisms" for funding HIV prevention and treatment, and (4) attend to the needs of women, children, and other vulnerable segments of the population. The "Framework" envisages a strong role for the OAU in monitoring individual states' progress in implementing their own country-specific plans, and calls on the OAU to develop a continent-wide action plan to be presented at the World Health Assembly in May 2001.

17. The only sour note in the Summit came during the "Vote of Thanks" in the closing ceremony. Conference organizers, in an incredible lapse of judgment, assigned the task of thanking the Nigerian hosts and the OAU sponsors to Col. Qadhafi. After five minutes of murmuring appropriate sentiments for the occasion, the Libyan leader launched into an anti-US diatribe, in which he accused the CIA of developing the AIDS virus to debilitate the developing world and create markets for US pharmaceutical "profit mongers."

18. When it became apparent that Qadhafi planned to sustain his diatribe, the official US delegation walked out, as did the official Japanese delegation and former President Rawlings among others. President Obasanjo, who chaired the closing session, appeared genuinely miffed at Qadhafi's conduct. When the Libyan President finished, Obasanjo said, "Well, our friend and brother has made a statement; he has made a l-o-n-g statement; and somewhere in that statement there was also a vote of thanks." We later heard from numerous sources that President Obasanjo, OAU Secretary General Salim A. Salim and many of the African

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delegations were livid about Qadhafi's antics, which they felt was a blight on an otherwise milestone Summit.  
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